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TENANCY IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC STATES

SUMMARY

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THE North Atlantic states, nine in number, consist of the six New England states, together with New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. In area they are but little more than one-fifth as large as the North Central group, while in the acreage of farm land the proportion is below one-fifth, and in improved land but one-seventh. The North Atlantic states have less than one-third as many farms as the North Central states. The East is characterized by a hilly, broken surface and comparatively thin soil, in contrast to the great level or rolling stretches with the deep soil of the middle West. The difference in topography, and the poorer quality of the soil, judged from the standpoint of grain production, help to determine the size of the farm, which in the North Atlantic states averages 96 acres and in the North Central group, 155 acres. During the past decade this difference has increased, the average size of farms of the former group growing smaller by one acre, and that of the latter group larger by 13 acres. At the same time the number of farms

in the eastern group decreased 3.5 per cent, while that in the middle western increased 1.4 per cent.

In value the eastern farms increased during the past ten years 31.9 per cent, the middle western, 113.8 per cent. At present the land alone in the North Central states is valued at about the same figure as land and buildings in the North Atlantic states, the values being, respectively, \$49.30 and \$49.95. In the production of cereals and live stock the eastern group shows not only a small production, but one lessening, as compared to the middle West. For example, there was a decrease in the wheat acreage of both sections from 1900 to 1910, but the decrease was relatively four times as great in the North Atlantic states. They are now producing a smaller proportion of the bread-stuffs of the nation than ever before. In corn acreage the North Atlantic states show for the past decade a decrease of 12.5 per cent; the North Central states show an increase of 1.1 per cent. The movement in the production of oats is similar. With respect to live stock the North Atlantic states show from decade to decade a continually decreasing proportion of the live stock of the country. For the census years 1900 and 1910, respectively, they reported 9.3 per cent and 9.1 per cent of the cattle, 9.3 per cent and 8.0 per cent of the horses, 6.9 per cent and 4.4 per cent of the sheep, and 3.7 per cent and 3.8 per cent of the swine.

There are, however, some important particulars in which the North Atlantic states rank high. The denser population encourages a more intensive type of agriculture, and in dairying, vegetable growing, and fruit growing this section holds an important place. Distinctively dairy farms are relatively more than five times as prevalent in this section as in the middle West; vegetable and fruit farms are three

times as prevalent; and in addition twice as great a proportion are classed as miscellaneous. Owing to the more intensive types of farming and the more careful adaptation of the crop to the particular soil best fitted to its production, the yields per acre in the East compare very favorably with those of the West.

All the foregoing facts affect the tenancy question. The predominating conditions point to a high percentage of ownership as compared to tenancy. To begin, the value of the land is not, on an average, very high, and in several states it is decidedly low. The percentage of tenancy follows very closely the value of land, tenancy being more prevalent where land is dearer. It is true that exceptions to the rule occur in a few instances in New England; but New England is no larger than the state of Michigan, and with so many cities, and with highly specialized types of agriculture here and there, it is no wonder that local exceptions to the general trend of tenancy should occur. Treating New England as a unit, the rank in value of land and in tenancy for the North Atlantic states correspond exactly, as the following figures show:

VALUE OF LAND AND PER CENT OF TENANCY

	Value per acre	Per cent of tenancy	Rank in value	Rank in tenancy
New Jersey	\$47.76	24.8	1	1
Pennsylvania	33 80	22 9	2	2
New York	31.97	20.8	3	3
New England	19.27	7.9	4	4

The relation of rate of tenancy to value of land may be illustrated by groups of counties within different states. Dividing the counties of Pennsylvania into

three groups, on the basis of land value, it is found that in the group with the highest value 29 per cent of the farms are in the hands of tenants; in the group next below in value the percentage of tenancy is 21; and in that with the lowest value the percentage of tenancy is 16. The same condition prevails in New York, where by the process of dividing the state into three groups of counties on the basis of value of land, the percentages obtained are for the first group 24.5, for the second, 23.9, and for the third, 18.5. It will be noticed that in New York the range in tenancy percentage is narrow, the difference between the first and the second group being especially slight. This is due in large measure to the presence of a great many suburban homes in the vicinity of New York City and along the Hudson river, which are reported as farms, tho in many instances not a great deal of agriculture is carried on in connection with them. Their values are, however, high.

In New Jersey the greatest proportion of tenancy is not in the counties with the highest land values. These counties, clustered around New York City and other large cities near by, contain a very great number of surburban homes of the kind just mentioned, and this fact, together with the influence of a considerable amount of specialized agriculture of the type accompanying ownership, has prevented the increase of tenancy.

It is in New England that the lowest proportion of tenancy on any considerable area within the older states of the Union is to be found, and nowhere else is the correspondence of low-priced land and low rate of tenancy more conspicuous. The average value of farm land in New England is \$19.27 per acre, and the per cent of tenancy is 7.9. The variation of this per-

centage from county to county is not great and does not follow very closely the price of land. The remarkable thing is the relative scarcity of rented farms.

Not only the low value of land, but also the smaller number of acres per farm is an important factor in the value of the farm as a unit. This value in the North Central states averages \$9,172, and in the North Atlantic states, \$4,805. Thus for the purchase of a farm in the latter section, not much over half the money is required that is required in the former.

However important the value per acre of land and the number of acres included in a farm may be in determining the line of cleavage between ownership and tenancy, it is certain that some types of farming lend themselves much more readily to the tenancy system than do others. And while it is not so easy to trace the connection between price of land and tenancy in the East as in the middle West, on account of the greater number of additional influences affecting the result, it is easier to identify some of these latter forces.

The contrast between the tenant farm of the East and that of the middle West is striking. In the middle West it is a little smaller than the owned farm; the buildings are decidedly inferior. In the East the tenant farm is larger by a few acres than is the owned farm, and the buildings are correspondingly more valuable. These striking differences are due to the fact that the greater proportion of tenants in the East, as in the middle West, gravitate toward the more extensive type of farming. But in the latter section this means less live stock and therefore fewer barns; the grain farming which the tenant follows requiring relatively few and inexpensive buildings. In the East the same motives and circumstances induce

many tenants, in addition to grain growing, to keep a large number of dairy cows, and dairies require good buildings. Therefore the rented farm in the eastern states has a better, at least a more expensive, set of buildings than has the owned farm. And this is one reason why the rented farm is worth an appreciably higher sum than is the owned farm.

As in the middle West, so in the East, the tenant raises more than his proportional share of the cereals, and especially is this true where the acreages are considerable. In New York the tenants grow 50 per cent more than their share of the wheat; in Pennsylvania 75 per cent more; in New Jersey 76 per cent more. Corn and oats are grown in similar tho somewhat smaller proportions by the tenants, and the same may be said of hay and forage. The important wheat-growing districts of the North Atlantic states comprise about 21 counties in Pennsylvania, 12 in New York, and 8 in New Jersey. These counties for the most part show high land values, yet in neither case are they the highest of the state. The percentages of tenancy, however, are higher than for the highest groups on the basis of value, being 30.6 per cent in Pennsylvania, 27.4 per cent in New Jersey, and 25.2 per cent in New York. With very few exceptions the greatest acreages of other cereals are found in the same counties in which the greatest acreages of wheat are grown; but the farms growing the major part of the wheat are larger than those producing the major part of the other cereals, indicating that the most extensive type of farming practised in this section is in connection with wheat growing. Thus again is emphasized the coincidence of tenancy with farming of an extensive sort.

The best agricultural showing made by the North Atlantic states is in dairy farming, and therefore the

relation of this industry to tenancy is of particular interest. It may sound a little strange to call dairying an extensive type of agriculture, but the term is a relative one; and, speaking relatively, dairying as usually carried on in the North Atlantic states may be so designated. It is at least a much more extensive type of agriculture than fruit and vegetable growing, both of which are very prevalent in these states. In the North Central states dairying is carried on mainly by owners, but in contrast to this the tenants of the North Atlantic states have charge of many more than their proportional number of dairy farms. The force of this, however, is not so evident in the number of farms reporting as in the number of dairy cows; of these the tenants reported in 1900 more than 25 per cent in excess of their proportional allotment. The prevalence of tenancy among dairy farmers is further emphasized within the districts where dairying predominates. In the ten leading dairy counties of New York, the average percentage of tenancy is 21, the same as for the whole state; but the tenants in these counties report 38 per cent more than their proportional number of cows. The question at once arises how these tenant dairymen accommodate themselves to the short and uncertain tenure by which they hold the farms, since it is not an easy matter to move the dairy equipment from one farm to another without considerable loss in the process of moving and readjusting. The answer is that these tenants do not move as frequently as do other classes of tenants, and (what is not the case in the greater part of the middle West) when they do move they have a reasonably good chance to find another farm with accommodations for dairying. In many instances the relation of landlord to tenant is much closer in this than

in other types of farming, the landlord frequently owning a share in the equipment and paying part of the regular expenses, the arrangement being analogous to a partnership. This higher percentage of tenancy in the dairy business than in general farming is found in all of the states of this group in which dairying is a leading business, but not, for example, to a noticeable degree in Maine and New Hampshire, where large dairies are few.

With regard to live stock other than cows and hogs, the tenant in the North Atlantic states, as in other parts of the country, has less than his proportional share. As in the North Central states, the tenants here raise relatively more hogs than do owners. It is in dairying alone that an important exception in relation to tenancy is apparent. Perhaps a word of caution may not be out of place. A large proportion (probably 75 per cent) of the dairies are in the hands of land-owning farmers; but the general low rate of tenancy in other lines gives the dairy tenant prominence.

More important than in any other part of the United States except the extreme West is the fruit farming of the North Atlantic states, and in this fact lies a considerable part of the explanation of the low rate of tenancy in this section. In the 1900 census about one farm in sixteen in this group was classified as a fruit farm, but this hardly gives an adequate picture of the situation, since a very great deal of fruit must have been produced on other farms, where it was a very important source of income, even tho not the leading one. The tenants are in charge of about four-fifths of their proportional number of distinctively fruit farms, but in quantity of fruit produced they rank much lower. Of small fruits the tenant grows com-

paratively little, and the same is true, to an even greater degree, of grapes, and hardly less so of peaches and pears. Apples are more generally grown and are found to some extent on almost all farms in the East, thus bringing the proportion grown by the tenant a little above that of the other fruits. Fruit growing and tenant farming are not compatible. The best results in fruit growing demand continuous and consistent plans extending over a period of years, a condition necessarily absent in the usual case of tenancy. Something more than the moderate extension of period of occupancy noted in connection with the dairy tenants would be required to make it feasible for the tenant to become a successful fruit grower. The tenant can leave the ordinary farm in a sufficiently discouraging condition after his own interest in it has ceased, but a fruit farm under such circumstances would suffer vastly greater deterioration. For example, a vineyard left unpruned or a strawberry bed neglected is not likely to be a source of profit during the first year following. Even orchard trees are the objects of constant solicitude where good results are obtained. It is therefore not a matter of surprise to find ownership high and tenancy low in districts where fruit is a leading crop.

It must be remembered, of course, that the price of land in census reports includes the value of all perennial plants growing upon it. Hence these reported values may cover up the fact that land not already planted to fruit, but suitable for such use, may be had at a comparatively low price. In this possibility of buying land, usually in small tracts and at a low price, lies a great part of the explanation of ownership as opposed to tenancy. It is possible under such conditions for a man of small means to acquire

ownership. But after developing such a farm he hesitates to lease it to a tenant, well knowing the difficulties and care involved in keeping it in running order. And the tenant on his part is seldom ambitious to undertake the management of such a farm. If he were, he would more likely start, in a small way, as the owner of a few acres out of which to make a fruit farm of his own.

Good examples of the low proportion of tenancy among fruit growers are found in New Jersey, where tenancy, in spite of a relatively high price of land, is decidedly low, being in some instances under half the average rate for the state. In the state of New York there is some confusion of evidence, since of the ten counties leading in fruit production five lie within and five without the main grain-growing district. For those within this district the low rate of tenancy for fruit farms is covered up by the high rate for the grain-producing farms, — very thoroly covered on account of the greater number of farms of the latter type. In the five fruit-growing counties outside the grain district the percentage of tenancy is in every instance well below the general average for the state. In the other states of the group the fruit-growing areas are not sufficiently separate from the general farming areas to admit of separate analysis based on the general statistics. Within these states, however, the proportion of fruit grown by tenants is as elsewhere low.

Another special type of farming of much importance in the North Atlantic states is that of growing vegetables. Unlike fruit farming much of this is in the hands of tenants. In the first place many such farms are in the vicinity of cities, on land high in price, often high because of possible uses other than agricultural. Land used for growing vegetables must be so thoroly

tilled that the danger of deterioration is small. The frequent moving of tenants on and off farms of this character is not so serious a drawback as it is in many other instances. The buildings are of a simple character, and not unusually great in value. The crops are almost without exception annuals. The equipment needed for running the farm is not elaborate. Under these conditions the tenant may even come and go within the year, raise a good crop, and yet suffer but the minimum loss due to the difficulties of moving and adjusting himself to a new environment. Of the number of farms in 1900 on which vegetables were the main source of income the tenants held about 14 per cent more than their proportional share. Yet, as in the case of fruit, the proportion of vegetables produced by tenants for the market is still higher. For example, they grow about 25 per cent more than their proportion of potatoes, and almost double their proportion of sweet potatoes. Tomatoes and melons are likewise favorite crops among tenants and in certain districts especially adapted to their growth, as southwestern New Jersey, about half of the total crop is grown by tenants. In making a considerable number of tests on this subject not an exception was found; the vegetable-growing business seems to be especially adapted to tenant farming.

Since 1880, the date when tenancy statistics were first gathered, the percentage of tenancy for the North Atlantic states has been low in comparison with that for the whole country, in fact lower than for any other group except the extreme West. In the Western Division conditions may properly be considered abnormal on account of the presence of many newly developed farms, and especially because so many of these have been taken recently from the public domain.

In the North Atlantic states, however, the term abnormal hardly applies, since farm land was long ago brought into use, and the readjustments which have been in progress are no greater than may be expected at any time. Especially is this true in view of the fact that the free land of the West was pretty well gone by the year 1880. For twenty years following 1880 the proportion of tenancy not only increased, but the increase was shared by every one of the five geographical divisions and by almost every state. In New England the proportion of tenancy has been low throughout, but in 1900 it could be said that there had been an important increase during each of the preceding two decades. In the North Atlantic group during that time about one farm in twenty had been taken from the category of ownership and added to that of tenancy. The portents were ominous. It was freely predicted that the fifth act of the play would represent the farmer divorced from his land. True a very few states, three New England states, for example, had shown for one or both of the decades preceding a slight tendency downward in the rate of tenancy, but only one of them had a smaller proportion than at the beginning of the period, and that an unimportant amount. Now, at the end of another ten years, every one of the nine states of the North Atlantic Division shows a positive, tho not great, gain in ownership, and corresponding decline in tenancy. Nearly three farms in every hundred passed over from the one class to the other. This amounts to a decrease of 16 per cent in the number of farms operated by tenants, in the face of an increase of 16 per cent in the number so operated for the country as a whole. In 1900 the rate of tenancy in the North Atlantic states was nearly 60 per cent of that for the United States; now it is less

PER CENT OF TENANCY 1880-1910

	1910	1900	1890	1880
North Atlantic States	18.1	20.8	18.4	16.0
Maine	4.3	4.7	5.4	4.3
New Hampshire	6.9	7.5	8.0	8.1
Vermont	12.3	14.6	14.6	13.4
Massachusetts	8.1	9.6	9.3	8.2
Rhode Island	18.0	20.1	18.7	19.9
Connecticut	9.8	12.9	11.5	10.2
New York	20.8	23.9	20.2	16.5
New Jersey	24.8	29.9	27.2	24.6
Pennsylvania	22.9	26.0	23.3	21.2

than 50 per cent. It cannot be an accident that has brought about such a striking change in the tenancy aspect of the eastern states, including as a matter of fact, in addition to the North Atlantic group, four more states immediately to the south. Neither is this decline in tenancy a symptom of declining agriculture; for these states, notwithstanding a falling off in certain particulars, all things counted, make a good showing.

The low proportion of tenancy in the North Atlantic states is the result of a combination of causes. The most important of these are, first, the low price of land per acre; second, a set of circumstances resulting in comparatively small farms, these two facts combining to give a low value to the farm as a unit; third, the relatively small amount of farming such as lends itself easily to a system of tenancy, and in its stead a type requiring ownership of the land in order to insure good results. That there are other factors involved cannot be doubted; but these statistics seem to indicate which are the decisive factors.

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